

FLATS FOR WORKERS

Success of Bronx Cooperative House Leads To Plans for Lower East Side

To demonstrate the success, after more than a year's operation, of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' cooperative apartments in Sedgwick Avenue, facing Van Cortlandt Park, and to illustrate the sort of transformation in housing he believes may be achieved in similar fashion on a large scale on the lower east side, Aaron Rabinowitz, member of the State Housing Board and a director of the Amalgamated Housing Development, has invited several hundred friends, realty men and city officials to an "open house" and tea there this afternoon.

"I have asked this group of influential citizens to view the first large unit of the apartments to see for themselves that what was distinctly a venture at the start has been a remarkable success from the standpoint of sociology, health and esthetics as well as financially," said Mr. Rabinowitz.

"We intend to expand the development of such modern housing facilities for wage earners not only in this Van Cortlandt Park section but also in the lower east side itself before long, for we believe the same principle will apply in an operation involving the tearing down of those unsightly blocks and replacing them with modern, sunny apartments," he went on. "The Amalgamated apartments, caring for 303 families in 1,189 rooms, equipped with modern conveniences, is a far cry from the shabby, dark quarters some of our occupants vacated on the east side to come here."

He exhibited some pictures of the unkempt, narrow quarters and junk-littered back yards which were the homes of some of the Amalgamated members before they moved to "their own places," and in contrast the clean, well-furnished rooms of the same clothing workers today, as proof of his conviction that the average wage earner has lived in squalor frequently merely because he could find no place better for the money he could pay, not because it was his natural state or because he wanted the dust and dirt.

Credit to Workingman.

"The way the people have kept up their places and the surroundings, including the court, has been a revelation to many skeptics," Mr. Rabinowitz declared. "They said the children would tear up the flowers and tear down the shrubbery. But it is a credit to the workingman and his sense of pride that they have

preserved the beauty of the court and take pride in it. The children really are an entirely different sort from those who, a short while ago, had only a garbage-littered space for a playground. The apartment has developed a new and entirely different set of children in whom a desire for cleanliness of person and pride in appearance is becoming more and more evident.

"Not a room has been vacant in the apartments since they were opened. In fact, they have been embarrassingly successful. Many workers who could not be accommodated there have come to us asking why they could not have the same thing, why they were not entitled to as nice a place to live as the friends they envied. We are planning other units, and you may get some idea of the popularity of the plan when I tell you that, although we have only broken ground for our second unit, next door, to accommodate 200 more families, every room has been taken a year before the building will be completed. Other units will follow. Why will not the same plan work in the east side, perhaps a more convenient location for many of the workers?"

He explained some of the details of the State housing law, under which the Amalgamated apartments were erected, and the reason for a lower cost. He is a director of the housing company because the law requires a member of the housing board, each of whom is familiar with building and building operation, to be associated with any such concern as a sort of adviser and overseer.

Only the land is taxed, and the oc-

cupants thus are saved \$3.50 to \$4 a room, he said. The law provides for borrowing up to two-thirds of the value of the completed properties at 5 per cent, and the money in this case came from the Metropolitan Life funds, the amount needed above the \$1,200,000 loan being contributed by the occupants. Their apartments are costing them \$11 a room.

Courts for Back Alleys.

The small and irregular spaces which they used for yards have been by this community proposition combined into a sizable court, he showed. The back alleys of the slums are gone forever for these workers, and with them unfit tenements which have been a major factor in developing unsavory neighborhoods.

"We believe the same transformation can come to almost all those blocks," Mr. Rabinowitz asserted.

Up-to-date living quarters are not the only community benefits they have achieved, he said. A kindergarten has been started, with a full-time teacher. An auditorium is the scene of numerous entertainments and dances. The residents have bought a bus for their own use and for transporting their children, particularly on Summer Sundays, to Rye Beach and other resorts.

Each family contributed \$5 when the need for a library became evident, and good books are at their disposal there.

There is a dining hall, and a commissary, Mr. Rabinowitz said, where the occupants of the apartments may buy their food at 35 per cent reduction or more, from retail prices, and where even with that reduction, by mass buying, a profit as high as \$1,000 is shown.